

# Welcome

## to the Wilderness Benefits Edition of the *Natural Inquirer*!

**I**n 1964, the U.S. Congress passed the Wilderness Act. This act established the National Wilderness Preservation System. The National Wilderness Preservation System encompasses 106,498,016 acres in the United States. Although that may seem like a big number, it only makes up 4.7 percent of the land in the United States! Wilderness is found in all but six States with a large portion, almost 54 percent, of the wilderness in Alaska. Federal wilderness lands are managed by four Federal agencies: the USDA Forest Service and the U.S. Department of the Interior's National Park Service, Bureau of Land Management, and the Fish and Wildlife Service.

Wilderness is defined as an “untrammeled” area. “Untrammeled” means that these lands are free from human control. There are no developments such as houses, lodges, or restaurants allowed in wilderness. Additionally, no motorized or mechanical equipment—such as bikes, cars, and snowmobiles—is allowed in wilderness. Due to the “wildness” of wilderness, there are many benefits to humans from these areas. Some of these benefits are summarized below.

### Some Benefits of Wilderness

- ✿ Ecosystem services—Provides protection for streams and other bodies of water, supports biodiversity, helps with climate stability, and helps purify air and water (For more information on ecosystem services, visit <http://www.esa.org>).
- ✿ Scientific values—Offers a “real world” laboratory to study the natural world.
- ✿ Geological values—Preserves unique geological areas such as volcanoes, geysers, glaciers, mountains, fossils, and caves.
- ✿ Educational values—Provides opportunity to learn about different ecosystems and wildlife, as well as land ethics, in an outdoor classroom.

- ✿ Aesthetic values—Protects land from development so that natural beauty is of primary importance as well as providing solitude and inspiration.
- ✿ Historical and Cultural values—Preserves areas that remind us of the past like burial grounds, cave paintings, and archaeological sites.
- ✿ Recreational values—Provides opportunities to engage in activities such as hiking, skiing, canoeing, fishing, hunting game, and enjoying the outdoors.

You will read about some of these wilderness benefits in this edition of the *Natural Inquirer*. Because some people have never visited wilderness, it is important to learn about the benefits these areas can provide.

### Fun Facts About Wilderness

- ✿ President Lyndon B. Johnson signed the Wilderness Act in 1964.
- ✿ More than 12 million individuals visit wilderness lands each year.
- ✿ In wilderness, people can hike, ride horses, hunt, fish, ski, raft, camp, and enjoy natural beauty.
- ✿ There are many important people such as Aldo Leopold, Arthur Carhart, Robert Marshall, Howard Zahniser, Ansel Adams, and Rachel Carson who helped support the wilderness cause. Each of these individuals contributed to the establishment and preservation of wilderness.
- ✿ The smallest wilderness is Pelican Island, Florida, which has 5 acres of land.
- ✿ The largest wilderness is Wrangell-Saint Elias, Alaska, which has 9,078,675 acres of land.

Go to <http://www.wilderness.net> for more great information and resources about wilderness!